

## Preface

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### Reviewing Perestrojka

The papers in this issue were initially presented as contributions to the proceedings of the seventh annual Aleksanteri Institute Conference, in Helsinki, at the end of November, 2007. The theme of the conference was *Revisiting Perestrojka: Processes and Alternatives*. In their present form all the papers—the authors of which are young scholars—have been thoroughly reworked and amplified, each being a significant statement about matters bearing on the socio-cultural background, the meaning, and the fall-out of *perestrojka*.

The contributions by Petrov and Prozorov are ambitious attempts to spotlight the meaning of *perestrojka* in historico-philosophical as well as discursive terms—just what do we mean by ‘end of communism’ against the background of Soviet ‘civilisation’ and current ‘post-Soviet’ reconstruction?

Peunova and Paulsen turn attention to the shifts in the production of socio-cultural discourse by the ‘intelligentsia’, within (Paulsen—the literary front) and without (Peunova—the liberal intelligentsia) the academy. Peunova, in particular, hits on an issue that is both sensitive politically and laden with cultural significance in the Russian context: the demise of the intelligentsia’s self-ascribed role as nay-sayer in the face of the centralized exercise of power.

Putinaite’s contribution is of considerable significance as a study in the morality of socio-political engagement under ‘Soviet’ conditions. *Perestrojka* became a window of opportunity for member states of the Soviet Union, such as Lithuania, to regain a modicum of autonomy. Putinaite investigates the many—and conflicting—sides of

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what she regards as in essence a moral question, the resolution of which has not been without consequences up to the present day.

The Editor